BY

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غيره، وليغفرلهم فى آخر ليلة (رواه احمد والبزا
روالبهقى، كما فى الترغيب)

My *Ummah* has been given five characteristic honours in the month of Ramadân which have not been given to any other *ummah* before.

1. The smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better with Allah than the smell of musk.

2. fishes (in the water) keep praying Allah to forgive the fasting persons until they make *iftar*.

3. In every day of Ramadân, Allah decorates the *Jannah* and addresses it saying" 'It is not too far that my righteous servants shall throw away the burdens (of the worldly life) and shall proceed towards you.

4. The rebellious satans are shackled in this month, and they cannot do in it what they do in other days (i.e. instigating men and women to commit sins.)

5. In the last night of this month, they (the fasting persons) are granted amnesty.

In a *hadith* narrated by 'Ubâdah ibn al Sâmit, رضى الله عنه the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

اتاكم رمضان، شهر بركة يغشاكم الله فيه
فينزل الرحمة ويحطّ الخطايا يستجيب فيه
الدعاء ينظر الله تعالى الى تنافسكم فيه،

ويباهى بكم ملائكته فأروا الله من انفسكم خيرا ، فان الشقىّ من حرم فيه رحمة الله عزوجل

Ramadân has come to you. It is the month of blessing in which Allah envelops you (with His kindness) He makes His mercy descend upon you, He forgives your sins and accepts your prayers. Allah witnesses you when you race one another (in virtuous deeds) in this month and becomes proud of you before His angels. Therefore, show Allah the best of deeds from your side, because unfortunate is that person who deprives himself from Allah's mercy in this month.

These *ahadith* are sufficient to explain the great merits Allah has invested this month with.

HOW TO SPEND RAMADÂN

The month of Ramadan is the season of divine blessings. It is the month of purification. it is meant for annual renovation of the inner spiritual qualities. It is a golden opportunity for every Muslim to strengthen his *'Iman,* to purify his heart and soul and to remove the evil effects of the sins committed by him.

This month invites a Muslim to minimize his other mundane involvements and maximize the acts of worship. One should plan his schedule for this month, before-hand, so as to spare maximum time for *'ibadah.*

Here is a brief list of the acts which should be carried out in Ramadan with due care:

1. To offer every prayer with *jama'ah* in a *masjid*.

2. To rise up a little earlier than the exact time of *suhoor* and to offer the *salah* of *tahajjud*. There is no prescribed number of the *Tahajjud* prayer. Yet, it is better to pray 8 *Rak'at*.

3. To offer the *nafl* prayers of *Ishraq* (two *rak'at* after sunrise) *Duha* (Four *rak'at* which may be performed at anytime after *Ishraq* before noon) and *Awwabin* (six *rak'at* after *maghrib*).

4. The recitation of the Holy Qur'an. No specific limit is prescribed. But one should recite as much of it as he can.

5. *Dhikr* or *Tasbeeh*, specially the following recitations:

(a) سبحان الله وبحمده سبحان الله العظيم

(b) سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله أكبر

(c) أستغفر الله ربّى من كل ذنب وأتوب إليه

(d) اللّهم صلّ على محمد النبى الأمّى وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم

(e) لا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلىّ العظيم

Apart from reciting these words, one hundred times each, at a particular time, they may also be continued frequently throughout the day, even if one is engaged in some light work, when walking and when

in bed.

6. Prayers and supplications: No particular prayer is prescribed. One can pray for everything he needs both in this world and in the Hereafter. However, the supplications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are so comprehensive that they encompass all that a Muslim can need in his life and after his death. It is, therefore, much advisable to pray Allah Almighty in the prophetic words used by the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

There are several books where these prophetic supplications have been compiled. Here is the name of two books which should be kept by every Muslim in his home and be used for praying daily:

(i) Al-hisnul-hasin الحصن الحصين By'Allamah al-jazri.

(ii) Munajat-e-Maqbool مناجات مقبول By Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi.

7. *Sadaqah* (charity): Apart from paying *zakah*, which is obligatory, one should also pay optional *sadaqah* in Ramadan according to his best ability. It is reported in authentic *ahadith* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to pay special attention in Ramadan to look after the poor and to help them financially. Therefore, a Muslim Should give as much money in *sadaqah* as he can afford.

WHAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED IN RAMADÂN

All sinful acts should be avoided completely dur-

ing the month of Ramadan. Although the sinful acts are totally prohibited in *Shariah*, whether in Ramadan or at any other time, but their prohibition becomes more severe in this month. It is evident that every Muslim avoids certain lawful acts, like eating and drinking, during the fasts. If he continues to commit sins in Ramadan, it will be a mockery to avoid lawful things and yet be engaged in unlawful acts never allowed in Shari'ah. Thus, the abstinence from sins be comes all the more necessary in this month.

Specially the following acts should be avoided totally:

(1) Telling a lie.

(2) *Gheebah* or backbiting i.e. condemnation of a person in his absence.

(3) Quarrelling.

(The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has particularly forbidden from it when one is in the state of fasting. He has directed us that, if someone wants to quarrel in Ramadan, we should tell him that we are fasting, hence we are not prepared to indulge in any quarrel.

(4) Eating unlawful things.

(5) Earning through unlawful means.

(6) Any act which may harm a person without a valid cause.

(7) Burdening one's servants or employees with a toilsome job beyond their ability, without providing them facilities to carry it out.

In short, one should try his best to refrain from all kinds of sins, and protect his eyes, ears, tongue and all other organs from indulging in an unlawful activity.

Once a Muslim spends the month of Ramadan in this way, he will *insha Allah*, find himself equipped with a spiritual strength which will facilitate for him to conduct a good Islamic life in accordance with the pleasure of Allah.

RULES OF FASTING

Fasting in the days of Ramadan is obligatory (*Fard*) on every Muslim. The one who does not believe it to be obligatory is not a Muslim, and the one who, without a valid excuse, does not fast in a day of Ramadan is a sinner.

"Fast" means "to refrain from eating, drinking and having sexual intercourse throughout the day, right from the break of dawn upto sunset, with a clear intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah." If somebody refrains from food, drink and sex for any reason other than seeking the pleasure of Allah, it cannot be called a "fast" in the terminology of the Shari'ah. It is thus necessary that there should be an intention which is called the "*Niyyah*".

For the fasts of Ramadan it is advisable that the

"*niyyah*" be made in the night i.e. before the commencement of the fast. However, if a person had no intention of keeping fast before dawn, he can also make "*niyyah*" in the morning at any time before midday, i.e. about 1 1/2 hours before *Zawal* (noon). But this rule is applicable only for the fast of Ramadan and for the *Nafl* (optional) fasts. As for fasts of *qada* it is always necessary to make *niyyah* before dawn.

Since the *niyyah* means intention, it is an act performed by one's heart. It need not be pronounced in words. However, it is also permissible to express this intention in spoken words, but those who take it as 'necessary' to pronounce the words of "*niyyah*" are not correct.

Acts nullifying the fast

Acts nullifying the fast are of two kinds. In the first place there are some acts which not only nullify the fast, but also make one liable to both *qada'* and *kaffarah*. The number of these acts is only three, namely:

(a) Eating something.

(b) Drinking something.

(c) Having sexual intercourse.

These three acts are liable to *kaffarah* when they are committed deliberately after one has started a fast, provided that the person committing them

knows that they render the fast broken.

In such cases both *qada'* and *kaffarah* are obligatory on him. *Qada'* means to keep another fast in lieu of the broken one. And *kaffarah* means to perform an act to expiate the sin of having broken the fast.

Kaffarah may be given in the following three ways respectively:

(a) Freeing a slave.

(b) Fasting for two months constantly without a break.

(c) Giving food to sixty persons.

Since slavery has come to an end in our days, only the latter two ways can be adopted today. But the person who has strength enough to fast for two months constantly has been bound to fast. He cannot adopt the third way, i.e. giving food to sixty persons. If he is too weak to fast for such a large number of days, he can give *kaffarah* by giving food to sixty persons.

In the second place there are some acts which nullify the fast, but do not make the relevant person liable to *kaffarah*. In such cases only *qada'* is obligatory. These acts are:

(i) Eating or drinking unintentionally. For example, while making *wudu*, if a drop of water slips into the throat unintentionally, the fast stands broken, but only the *qada'* will be enough to compensate for the

mistake.

(ii) Dropping medicine or anything else in the nose or the ear.

(iii) Smoking.

(iv) Emission of semen while touching, kissing or caressing a woman.

(v) Eating or drinking under the wrong impression that the dawn has not yet broken, or the sun has set, while otherwise was true.

(vi) If someone eats or drinks while he does not remember that he is in a state of fasting, his fast is not broken. He should continue with his fast after he remembers. However, if he eats or drinks after he remembers, his fast will stand broken, and if this eating or drinking was due to his wrong impression that his fast stood broken by his first eating or drinking, he will be liable to *qada'* only.

Acts rendering the fast *makrooh*:

The following acts do not nullify the fast, but render it *makrooh* in the sense that they lessen the reward of the fast. Hence it is not advisable to indulge in any of the following acts when one is in the state of fast:

(i) Chewing something or tasting it with the tongue without eating it.

(ii) Using tooth paste or tooth powder. However,

cleaning teeth with a *miswak* or a brush (without paste or powder) is allowed.

(iii) Remaining in the state of *Janabah* (major impurity) for the whole day.

(iv) Giving blood to anyone.

(v) Quarrelling with someone or abusing him.

(vi) *Gheebah* i.e., to abuse or to blame someone in his absence.

(vii) Telling a lie.

The latter three acts are absolutely prohibited even when one is not in the state of fasting, but they become all the more prohibited when one keeps fast.

Acts which are allowed

The following acts are allowed in the state of fasting:

(i) Cleaning teeth using a *miswak* or a brush and ears with cotton swabs.

(ii) Applying oil or *henna* or colour to the hair.

(iii) Using eye-drops or *kohl* (*surma/kajal*).

(iv) Wearing perfume or feeling it, or using lipstick or chopstick.

(v) Taking a shower.

(vi) Using medicine through injection.

(vii) Vomiting unintentionally.

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(viii) Entrance of smoke or dust into the throat unintentionally.

(ix) Ejaculation while dreaming.

(x) Bleeding from the teeth unless blood slips in to the throat.

(xi) Delaying the *ghusl* of *janabah* upto the sunrise.

Cases in which fasting is not obligatory

In the following cases it is allowed for a Muslim to avoid fasting in Ramadan and compensate it by fasting on some other days:

(i) If a person suffers from a disease which has rendered him unable to fast , or a competent doctor has expressed his apprehension that fasting may increase the disease, he can avoid fasting until when it is clear that fasting is no more injurious to his health. But after recovery he is under an obligation to perform *qada'* of all the fasts he has missed due to his sickness.

(ii) If a woman is pregnant, and it is seriously feared that fasting may harm her or her baby, she can postpone fasting in Ramadan and may fast after delivery as *qada'*.

(iii) If a woman breast-feeds her baby, and it is seriously feared that, in case she fasts, she cannot feed her baby or her fasting may harm her or her baby, she

can avoid fasting in Ramadan and perform *qada'*.

Fasting in journey

(iv) The one who travels to a distance of at least 48 miles from his hometown can also postpone fasting during his journey. But if he resolves to stay in a town for more than 14 days, he is not treated as a traveller for this purpose and he is obligated to fast in the days of Ramadan. However, if he has not made up his mind to stay in a place for more than 14 days, and he is doubtful whether he will stay for 14 days or less than that, he can also avail of the concession, unless he decides to stay for the prescribed period, i.e. more than 14 days. If he remained uncertain about his stay but stayed at a place for even more than 14 days in this state of uncertainty, he will remain entitled to this concession until he resolves positively to stay for another 15 days.

Although this concession is available to every traveller who leaves his hometown to a distance of at least 48 miles, yet if the journey is comfortable and fasting is not very burdensome on him, it is more advisable for him to fast for two reasons. Firstly, because such a traveller gets more *thawab* (reward) in case he fasts during his journey, and secondly, because if he avoids fasting while on travel, he will have to fast after Ramadan which can be more difficult for him.

But if the journey is a difficult one, and it is much

burdensome to fast in such a difficult journey, then, it is more advisable for him to avoid fasting, but if fasting seems to be nearly unbearable for him, it is not lawful to keep fast in such a journey.

If someone has started fasting, then he had to travel during the day, he cannot avail of the concession during that day, rather he will have to complete his fast unto the sunset. However, if his journey continues on to the next day, he can benefit from the concession the next day.

Conversely, if someone was on travel in the beginning of a day, and he did not keep fast for that reason and began to eat and drink but he reached his hometown during the day, he must avoid eating or drinking after reaching his hometown unto the sunset. This abstinence from eating and drinking will not be counted as a fast, and he will have to perform *qada'* of that day also, but he is directed to abstain from eating and drinking only to honour that part of the day of Ramadan which he has passed in his hometown.

(v) Fasting is prohibited for women during their monthly periods (menstruation) and during partition (i.e. normal bleeding after childbirth), but they have to perform *qada'* for the fasts they have missed in such a state.

(vi) Those who are allowed a concession (of not fasting) in Ramadan can eat and drink during the day,

but they should honour the days of Ramadan and should not eat or drink as far as possible at a public place or before other Muslims who are in the state of fasting.

Those who can break their fast during the day

It is major sin to break a fast during the day without a valid excuse. It makes one liable to *kaffarah* as explained earlier. However, there are situations where it becomes lawful to break a fast. These situations are as under:

Concession given to a sick person

(a) Where a person is attacked by a severe disease, and a competent doctor opines that, if he continues with his fast, it will bring a serious danger to his life. In such a situation breaking of the fast is not only allowed, but it is obligatory.

(b) A person feels such an extreme hunger or thirst that further abstinence from eating or drinking may endanger his life. In this situation also, breaking of the fast is obligatory.

(d) In any situation where refraining from eating or drinking may create a serious danger to one's life, it becomes lawful to break the fast.

In all these cases, the person breaking the fast is not liable to *kaffarah*, but he has to perform *qada'* whenever the danger is removed.

Suhoor or *Sehri*

'*Suhoor*' is the meal one takes in the last hours of the night before the commencement of a fast. It is a *Sunnah* to have '*Suhoor*'. If someone has no appetite at that time, it is advisable for him to have something light. Even by having a few sips of water the *sunnah* of *suhoor* can be fulfilled. Although the '*Suhoor*' can be had any time after midnight, but it is more advisable to have it in the last hour of the night immediately before the break of dawn.

The '*Suhoor*' can be continued upto the break of dawn. But in order to be on the safe side, it is advisable to refrain from eating or drinking a few minutes earlier than the break of dawn. Eating or drinking after the dawn even for a single minute renders the fast void.

If one is doubtful whether the dawn has broken or not, he should refrain from eating or drinking. However, if he eats or drinks in this state of uncertainty, his fast is valid unless it is proved later that he had eaten or drunk after the break of dawn, in which case, he will have to observe another fast.

Iftar

Iftar means to conclude a fast after sunset by eating or drinking something. It is also a *sunnah* to make *iftar* soon after sunset, and it is *makrooh* to delay *Iftar* after sunset without a valid excuse. However, if some-

one is doubtful whether the sun has set or not, he should not make *iftar* until he is sure about it, because if it is proved at any time that he had made *iftar* even half a minute earlier than the sunset actually took place on his horizon, his fast will be rendered nullified and void. Similarly, if the weather is cloudy, it is advisable to delay *iftar* for a few minutes after the time of sunset.

No particular meal is prescribed for *iftar* but it is advisable to make *iftar* using dates because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم generally used dates for *iftar*.

It is also *sunnah* to recite the following *du'a* (prayer) while making *iftar*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَكَ صُمْتُ وَبِكَ آمَنْتُ وَعَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَعَلَى رِزْقِكَ أَفْطَرْتُ

O' Allah, for you I have fasted, and in you I have believed and in You I have placed my trust and with Your provision I make my Iftar.

and after having and drinking water, it is advisable to say,

ذَهَبَ الظَمَأُ وَابْتَلَّتِ العُرُوْقُ وَثَبَتَ الأَجرُ إن شَاءَ اللّٰهُ

- Thirst has gone; veins have become wet and the reward (of the fast) has, God willing, been established.

FAST OF *QADA'*

Whoever has missed a fast of Ramadan is liable to compensate it with fasting after Ramadan. This fast is called 'the fast of *Qada*'.

Fast of *qada'* may be observed any day during the year except for the following days:

(a) First of Shawwal (*Eidul-fitr*).

(b) Tenth of Zulhijjah (*Eidul-adha*).

(c) Eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth of Zulhijjah. On these days fasting is strictly prohibited. so the fast of *Qada'* cannot be observed on these days.

Fast of *qada'* should be observed as soon as possible after one has missed a fast of Ramadan. Delaying the performance of *qada'* without a valid reason is not desirable. If some one has missed more than one fast, he can perform *qada* for all of them continuously, or with intervals. But the fasts of *kaffarah* should necessarily be continuous - without any interval. Any interval makes the previous fasts nullified for the purpose of *kaffarah*, and one has to begin the fasts all over again.

Unlike the fast of Ramadan and optional (*Nafl*) fasts, in the fast of *Qada'* it is necessary to make *niyyah* before the dawn.

If a person has an obligation to keep a large number of the fasts of *qada'*, he should write down the ex-

act number of the fasts due on him. He should also make a will that if he could not fast in his life time, his heirs should pay *fidyah* (redemption from obligation not carried out) from his left over property. The amount of *fidyah* for one fast is one kilo and six hundred sixty two grams of wheat or its price. If the amount of *fidyah* can be paid from one-third property of a deceased person who has made a will to pay *fidyah*, the heirs are bound to pay it from his left over property. But if the deceased made no will to pay *fidyah*, the heirs are not bound to pay it from his property. Similarly, if the amount of *fidyah* exceeds one-third of the property left by the deceased, the heirs are not liable to pay the excess, unless they wish to do so by their free will.

TARAWIH

Another important feature of the month of Ramadan is *Tarawih*. It is a special *Salah* (prayer) consisting of 20 *rak'at* which is performed immediately after the *'Isha'* prayer. This *Salah* is *Sunnah mu'akkaddah* (repeatedly emphasized), and should not be missed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said,

> "Allah has made fasting in Ramadan obligatory, and I have made the special prayer of Ramadan (i.e. the *Tarawih*) a *Sunnah*".

It is a *Sunnah Mu'akkadah' 'alal-kifayah* to perform *Tarawih* in *jama'ah*. It means that it is a *Sunnah mu'akkadah* for the people of every mosque to arrange

for the *jama'at* of the *Tarawih*. If a person after being sure that the *jama'ah* of *Tarawih* is being held in his mosque, performs the *Tarawih* in his home without *jama'ah*, the *sunnah* of the *Tarawih* is discharged, but he will be deprived of the great *thawab* (reward) of praying with *jama'ah*. So, one should perform the *Tarawih* in the mosque as far as possible.

It is also a *Sunnah* to complete the recitation of the whole Quran in *Tarawih* in Ramadan. It is thus advisable to request a *hafiz* (one who has memorized the Holy Quran by heart) to lead the prayer of *Tarawih*. However, paying any fee to the *hafiz* for this purpose is not allowed. If no such *hafiz* is available, the *Tarawih* should be led by any Imam, and he can recite in it whatever Surahs of the Holy Qur'an he remembers.

As a general practice, the Holy Qur'an is completed in most of the mosques a few days before the end of Ramadan, on the 27th night or even earlier. In such a case, *Tarawih* should be continued till the last night of Ramadan with recitation of different surahs. Those who leave *Tarawih* after the completion of the Holy Qur'an are not correct, because *Sunnah* of the *Tarawih* remains unchanged unto the last night.

The time of *Tarawih* begins after the performance of the obligatory (*Fard*) prayer of *'Isha*. Therefore, the one who has not performed the *Fard* prayer of *'Isha*

cannot join the prayer of *Tarawih*. He should perform the *Fard* of *'Isha* first, then join the *Tarawih*. If he missed some *rak'at* of *Tarawih*, he can complete it after the *witr*. For example, a person came to the mosque when the Imam has performed four *rak'at* of *Tarawih*. He should perform the *Fard* of *'Isha* first, then join the *jama'ah* for *Tarawih*. If he has missed 4 or 6 *rak'at* of *Tarawih*, he should also perform the *witr* prayer with the Imam, then pray the four or six *rak'at* he has missed on his own, individually.

Laylatulqadr: ليلة القدر

One of the most meritorious aspects of the month of Ramadan is that it contains *Laylatulqadr*, the most blessed night of the year. It is the night which Allah Almighty chose to reveal the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned that this night is better than one thousand months. It means that the worship performed in this night brings more reward than the worship performed in one thousand months. The authentic Traditions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم mention that, in this night, Allah Almighty directs His special mercy towards the people of the earth, accepts the supplications made by His slaves and forgives a large number of people who repent and pray.

Laylatulqadr falls in one of the last five odd nights of Ramadan i.e. 21st, 23rd 25th, 27th and 29th. According to authentic sources, *Laylatulqadr* falls in any one of these night alternately. The purpose of this al-

The Month of **RÂMADÂN**

The ninth month of the Islamic calender is called "Ramadân" and it is the most meritorious month of the whole year. Since there are many specific rules peculiar to this month, we would like to deal with its characteristics in a rather detailed manner under different sections.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RAMADÂN

The Holy Qur'an has expressly told us that the basic objective for which man is created by Allah is that he "worships" Him:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْاِنْسَ اِلاَّ لِيَعْبُدُوْنَ

> And I did not create Jinn and human beings except that they should worship Me.
> (______)

The word used by the Holy Qur'an for the worship is "*ibâdah*" which has a much wider sense than "worship". In English, the word "worship" normally indicates to some specific acts or rituals meant exclusively to show one's reverence to his Creator. But the

ternation is that one should spend all the five nights in worship and prayers, so that he may find *laylatul-qadr* with certainty.

No special form of worship is prescribed for *Laylatulqadr*. The night should be spent by offering as much *nafl* prayers as one can offer, in recitation of the Holy Qur'an, in *dhikr* and *Tasbeeh*, in supplications and in making *sadaqah* (charity).

It is not advisable in this night to hold ceremonies or meetings or delivering long lectures or illuminating the mosques. This is a night meant for developing a special connection with one's Creator, for offering acts of worship in solitude and seclusion, for having constant and exclusive contact with his Lord who is the Lord of the universe, for minimizing the diversity of thoughts and actions and for devoting oneself to Allah Almighty with his heart and soul.

This purpose can seldom be achieved in congregations and assemblies. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم never tended to celebrate this night by lectures, meetings, illumination or even by offering prayers in *jama'ah*. Instead, he used to perform acts of worship individually, and in solitude.

Sayyidah 'Aishah رضى الله عنها once asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ as to what *du'a* (supplication) she should recite in the *Laylatulqadr*. The Holy Prophet ﷺ taught her the following *du'a*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ إِنَّكَ عَفُوٌّ تُحِبُّ العَفْوَ فَاعْفُ عَنِّى

Allah, You are surely most forgiving and
You like forgiving. so, forgive me.

The best way to benefit from the blessings of this night is to keep awake for the whole night and spend it in worship and prayers. But people who cannot do so for any reason should spare at least a considerable part of the night for acts of worship. At least 8 *rak'at* should be prayed after midnight as *tahajjud*, some part from the Holy Qur'an should be recited and the supplications of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should be offered. Any *Dhikr* or *Tasbeeh* should be constantly recited, specially the following *dhikr* has numerous merits:

سبحان الله والحمد لله ولا إله إلا الله والله
أكبر ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله العلى العظيم

Even when one is not in the state of *wudu*, the *Dhikr* and *Tasbeeh* may be recited. Similarly, the *dhikr* may also be performed during other states, when walking or in bed.

I'TIKAF

Another unique form of worship in this month is "*i'tikâf*" in which a person gives up all his activities, abandons his attachments, associations and routines and enters the mosque for a specific period.

Islam does not approve monasticism which is based on the concept that Allah's pleasure cannot be

attained without abandoning all worldly activities for ever. The Holy Qur'an has expressly condemned this concept. Islam has, instead, emphasized on earning one's livelihood through permissible means, on one's mingling with his family members and on discharging all the obligations toward his wife, children, relatives, neighbours and other acquaintants. But at the same time, as explained earlier in more detail, sometimes one's deep involvement in these activities slows down his spiritual progress. In order to repair this loss, a Muslim is required to spare a time in which he separates himself from the normal routine of worldly activities and to sit in seclusion, devoting his heart and soul for pure spiritual acts. *I'tikâf* is a buantiful way to carry out this objective. In *I'tîkâf* one leaves his home and family and undertakes to remain in the mosque for a limited period. This unique mode of worship can be done any time in the year. However, it has been declared as a '*Sunnah mu'akkadah*' in the last ten days of Ramadân, because Ramadân is the most suitable time to carry out this worship. Moreover, the last ten days of Ramadân are the days in which '*Lailat-ul-Qadr*' normally occurs and as explained earlier, its definite time is unknown. It may occur in any of the odd nights of these days. When one is in the state of *i'tikâf* for the last ten days of Ramadân, he can surely benefit from its infinite merits, because even if he is sleeping in the '*Lailat-ul-Qadr*', while he is in the State of *i'tikâf,* it will be credited to his account as 'worship' in the '*Lailatul-Qadr'*, because each and eve-

ry second in the state of *i'tikâf* is *'ibâdah*, even if one is eating, drinking or sleeping. This extraordinary privilege cannot be attained in one's home. That is why the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to perform *i'tikâf* every year in Ramadân.

The detailed injunctions and regulations of *'i'tikâf* are explained in my book 'The Rules of *I'tikâf*' and it is not proper to reproduce all of them here. However, some fundamental rules of *i'tikâf* are summarized here:

Some Rules of *I'tikâf*

1. *I'tikâf* in the last ten days of Ramadân is *sunnah 'alal kifâyah*. It means that in each mosque, at last one person should sit in *I'tikâf*. If he does so, the requirement of *Sunnah* is fulfilled for the whole locality. However, if no person performs *i'tikâf*, the whole locality is responsible for not observing the *sunnah*. Therefore, the residents of a locality should make sure that some person is performing *i'tikâf* in their mosque. If no such person is available, they should prepare someone to do so.

2. The time of this *i'tikâf* commences immediately after the sunset of the twentieth day of Ramadân. Therefore, a person who wants to sit in *i'tikâf*, must enter the mosque before sunset on that day, so that sunset takes place while he is in the mosque.

3. The main requirement for a valid *i'tikâf* is that one remains in the limits of the mosque throughout the period of *I'tikâf* and never comes out of it, except

for the necessities like easing oneself by attending the call of nature.

4. The "limits of the mosque" for the purpose of *i'tikâf* are restricted to the places meant for offering *salah* and determined as such by the founders of the mosque or by its administration. Therefore, the places like the place of ablution, toilets etc. are not included in the "limits of a mosque" for the purpose of *i'tikâf*. Therefore, if a person enters these places without the aforesaid necessity, his *i'tikâf* shall terminate.

5. One can go out of the mosque during *i'tikâf* only for the following needs:

(i) to answer the call of nature

(ii) to make obligatory *ghusl,* i.e. in the state of impurity (*janabah*) (It should be remembered that it is not allowed during *i'tikâf* to go out of the mosque for having a non-obligatory bath, like the bath of Friday etc.)

(iv) to bring food where no other person is available to bring it. In this case it is allowed either to bring food to the mosque or to have food elsewhere outside the mosque.

(v) to offer the *jum'ah* prayer, if no *jum'ah* prayer is offered in the same mosque in which he is sitting in *i'tikâf*.

(vi) To move to another mosque in the event of a serious danger to one's life or property.

5. It is advisable that a person performing *i'tikâf*

avoids all unnecessary activities and spends the most of his time in the acts of worship, like *salah*, recitation of the Holy Qur'an or making *dhikr* or *tasbīh*. However, it is *makrûh* to remain silent totally.

6. The following acts result in terminating the '*i'tikâf*':

(i) To leave the mosque even for a moment without the aforesaid needs

(ii) To remain outside the mosque after fulfilling the aforesaid needs.

(iii) To have sexual intercourse, or emission through some other intentional acts like kissing, cuddling etc. which are totally prohibited in *i'tikâf*.

(iv) Any act which breaks one's fast, like eating, drinking etc. (Since fasting is a pre-condition for a valid *masnûn i'tikâf*, the *i'tikâf* is automatically terminated by breaking of the fast).

7. If the *i'tikâf* is terminated for any reason, it becomes obligatory on the relevant person that he makes *qadâ'* of the *i'tikâf* for one day only (He need not to perform *i'tikâf* for ten days). for example, A started a *masnûn i'tikâf* on 21st night of Ramadân with intention to sit in *i'tikâf* for ten days, but on 25th of Ramadân he came out of the mosque mistakenly or unconsciously. His *i'tikâf* is thus terminated. Now, he has to make *qadâ'* of one day only. He needs not to repeat the *i'tikâf* for ten days, nor for five days. He is required to make *qadâ'* only for one day. therefore, he can dis-

charge this obligation by starting *i'tikâf* for one day, either in the same Ramadân, or after Ramadân by keeping a *nafl* fast, or in the next Ramadân. If he elects to perform *qadâ'* in the same Ramadân, he can sit in *i'tikâf* before the sunset of 25th Ramadân (in which his *i'tikâf* was terminated) and observe *i'tikâf* upto the sunset of 26th. His obligation will be discharged. Then, he is at liberty either to go home or to continue his *i'tikâf* as *nafl* (and not as a *sunnah or wâjib*)

word "*ibâdah*' is not restricted to such acts or rituals, rather, it embodies any act done in submission to Allah's commands and to seek His pleasures. Therefore, many acts which seem to be mundane in nature are included in the word of '*ibâdah*' like earning one's livelihood through *halâl* (permissible) means and in order to fulfill one's obligations towards his dependants.

However, '*ibâdah*' is of two kinds. At the first place there are acts meant exclusively to worship Allah, having no worldly objective, like *Salah*, fasting etc. These are direct acts of '*ibâdah*' while the other kind of '*ibâdah*' includes the acts which are primarily mundane, but they are converted into an '*ibâdah*' when they are performed in full conformity with Shari'ah and with an intention to discharge one's obligations. Therefore, these acts are treated as "*ibâdah*' in an indirect manner. It is obvious that the direct acts of "*ibâdah*' should be superior to the indirect ones.

Now, while prescribing very few acts of direct '*ibâdah* in one's daily life, like the *salah* which is performed five times a day, Islam has left its followers mostly with the indirect acts of '*ibâdah* like eating, drinking, earning the livelihood and association with one's wife, children, parents, relatives, friends and other human beings. But the primary nature of these acts being mundane, one becomes so absorbed in their worldly pleasures that their material aspects prevail on their spiritual aspect. Therefore, these acts have

less spiritual strength than the direct acts of worship.

Since the direct acts of *'ibâdah* are very few in one's daily life as compared to the indirect ones, his spiritual progress becomes slow *visa vis* his material progress. The month of Ramadân has been designed to maintain a balance between material and spiritual aspects of the human life. This month is meant to maximize the direct acts of *'ibâdah* and to minimize the pure mundane activities, so that one may accelerate his spiritual progress to make up the distance and to repair the spiritual loss one may have suffered through his deep involvement in the mundane activities during the year. The days of Ramadân are designed to keep fast which is an act of *'ibâdah* for the whole day, and depriving oneself from any material food for many hours, it lessens the bad spiritual effects, if any, of the material pleasures. The nights of Ramadân, on the other hand, are spent in offering *Tarawîh* and waking up for *tahajjud* and *suhûr*, reducing the time of one's sleep much less than in the normal days. Moreover, apart from the prescribed acts of worship, one is supposed to offer as much optional (*nafl*) *'ibâdah* in this month as he can. In this way the level of one's spiritual activities in this month is raised up much higher than in other days of the year.

This philosophy of the month of Ramadân makes it clear that this month should be devoted to the direct acts of worship as far as possible. That is why the re-

ward of the virtuous acts in this month has been multiplied. This is to encourage the Muslims to the maximum possible acts of *'ibâdah.*

THE MERITS OF RAMADÂN

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has mentioned the merits of Ramadân in a large number of *ahadith.* Some of them are reproduced here with translation:

عن سلمان رضى الله عنه قال: خطبنا رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فى آخر يوم من شعبان فقال: يا ايّها الناس: قدأظلكم شهر عظيم مبارك فيه ليلة خير من ألف شهر، جعل الله صيامه فريضة وقيام ليله تطوعا من تقرب فيه بخصلة كان كمن ادّى فريضة فيما سواه، ومن ادّى فريضة فيه كان كمن ادّى سبعين فريضة فيما سواه، وهو شهر الصبر، والصّبر ثوابه الجنّة، وشهر المواساة، وشهر يزادفيه رزق المؤمن، من فطّر فيه صائما كان مغفرة لذنوبه وعتق رقبته من النار وكان له مثل اجره، من غير ان ينقص من اجره شيئ، قالوا: يا رسول الله ! ليس كلّنا يجد ما يفطّر به الصائم، فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يعطى الله هذا الثواب من فطّر صائما على تمرة اوشربة ماء ، أومذقة لبن. وهو شهر

أوله رحمة، واوسطه مغفرة، وآخره عتق من النار . واستكثروا فيه من اربع خصال: خصلتين تُرضون بهما ربكم، وخصلتين لاغناء بكم عنهما. فأما الخصلتان اللتان تُرضون بهما ربكم، فشهادة أن لا إله إلا الله، وتستغفرونه وأما الخصلتان اللتان لاغناء بكم عنهما، فتسئلون الله الجنّة وتعوذون به من النار. ومن سقى صائما سقاه الله من حوضى شربة لا يظمأ حتى يدخل الجنّة (رواه ابن خزيمة فى صحيحه والبيهقى وغيرهما) (الترغيب والترهيب للمنذرى ص ٢٠٣)

Salmân, the Persian رضى الله عنه has reported the following: "The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم addressed us on the last day of Sha'bân wherein he said:

"O men, a great, blessed month has cast its shadow upon you. It is a month which contains a night far better than one thousand months, a month Allah has made it obligatory to fast therein and made it commendable to stand up praying in its nights. If someone seeks Allah's nearness by offering an optional act of worship in this month, it will be as rewarding as to offer an obligatory worship in other days, and if someone performs an obligatory act of worship in this month, it will carry as much reward as the reward of performing seventy obligatory acts of worship in other days. It is the

month of patience and the reward of patience is Jannah (paradise) It is a month of sympathy, a month in which the provision for a believer is increased. If someone provides another person with food to make Iftâr (terminate one's fast by eating or drinking something) it will cause forgiveness to his sins and freeing his neck from hell and he will be awarded the same thawâb as the fasting person will be rewarded for his fast, without decreasing his own thawâb.

The companions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, "O Messenger of Allah, every one of us does not have enough food to offer for iftâr to another fasting person." The Holy Prophet ˆ said, "This thawâb will also be given to a person who offers to a fasting person one date or a drink of water or a little milk for his iftâr. And this is a month the first part of which is mercy from Allah, the middle of which is the forgiveness from Allah and the last part of which is liberation from hell. If someone relaxes the burden of work from his slave in this month, Allah will forgive him his sins and will free him from the Fire. In this month you should do four acts frequently. Two acts are such that you will please your Lord through them and two are such that you can never claim to be need-free of them. As for the two acts you please Allah through them, they are: to bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and to seek forgiveness from Allah. And the two acts you can never

be need-free of them are: to pray Allah to give you the Jannah (the Paradise) and to seek refuge to Allah from the Fire. And if someone serves a drink to a fasting person, Allah will make him have such a drink from my canal (the Kauthar) that he will never get thirsty after it until he enters the Jannah."

This *hadîth* gives us a detailed account of the peculiar merits of the month of Ramadan and of what we should try to do in it. The upshot of the *hadith* is that one should not restrict himself to fasting in this month; rather he should maximise the number of his virtuous acts and take this opportunity to seek forgiveness for his sins and to secure as much *thawâb* as he can, by offering the *nafl* acts of worship including charitable acts.

In another *hadith,* reported by Abû Hurairah رضى الله عنه the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

خمس خصال فى رمضان لم تعطهنّ أمة قبلهم:
خَلوف فم الصّــائم اطيب عند الله من ريح
المسك ، وتستغفرلهم الحيتان حتى يفطروا ،
ويزين الله عـزّوجل كل يوم جنتـه ثم يقـول:
يوشك عبادى الصالحون أن يلقوا عنهم المؤونة
وليصيروا إليك، وتصفّد فيه مردة الشياطين،
فلا يخلصوا فيه إلى ماكانوا يخلصون إليه فى